



# The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MAY & JUNE 2014

A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

## Monthly Meeting:

**May 14, 2014**

Always the second Wednesday

**Time: 7:30 p.m.**

Registration of new members and library opens at 7:00 p.m.

**Topic: Dear Child of Mine - How do I honor you?**

**First Presbyterian Church  
502 Eldridge Road  
Sugar Land, Texas**

*Directions:* Eldridge Rd. (FM 1876) intersects Hwy. 90A two lights west of the Sugar Land exit of Hwy 59. The church is north of 90A, just past the RR tracks, the second building on the right. Enter the double doors at the back of the building.

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## Springtime's Burden Becoming Promise

Seasonal changes are difficult for many bereaved parents. This is often most true as winter yields to spring.

The land seems to throb with life once more as young buds emerge and robins return from their sojourn in the south. Lilacs bloom and the breeze carries their fragrance. Woodland animals begin to lose the leanness of winter hunting or quiet hibernation.

The day is longer and filled with renewed vitality to match its length. It is as if a cold hand had loosen its bitter grip and the earth is reborn.

It is this quality of resurrection that seems so bitter. For as we struggle in the darkness of loss, all around us is the vigorous rush of life breaking forth in colors and song. But our children do not come forth. They dwell in the land of death and the netherworld nightmares of our anguish.

But I believe we can see as well the promise inherent in spring's unfolding glory and grasp the continuity its return affirms. Last fall we saw an acorn, but this year we see the tender shoot of an infant tree. From gnarled, dead-looking stumps, the cut-back rose sends tendrils of green to drink the sun.

In each full cycle of our planet around its sun, we encounter irrefutable testament to renewal. In this we sense the defeat of death. This is the time of year, when twilight surrenders to darkness, to stand outside and feel the rays of countless stars, smell the scents granted by the new earth, hear the chorus of night creatures and sense the rebirth that has no end.

Stand silently then, beneath the constancy of the night sky and upon the rejuvenating earth, and sense our children, constant and growing too, yet beyond our sight. Life continues. There are no endings. There are only beginnings. That is the promise of spring.

Don Hackett, TCF, South Shore, MA



### Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting or received their first newsletter last month. We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not for profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the second Wednesday of the month).

Meetings are open to everyone and free of charge. The purpose of our support group is not to focus on the cause of the death or the age of the child. It is instead a place to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child. You are free to talk, cry or sit in silence, we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

### To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. It may be the second or third meeting before you find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

### To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”

Lovingly Lifted from TCF –Tyler Texas Newsletter

## LOVE SHARES

In Memory of	Given by
Personal information has been deleted for the  Internet version of this newsletter.	

Consider giving a Love Share in your child’s memory. Help us continue our mission to help grieving parents. All Love Shares are tax deductible.

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## What I Need

*By Beth Pinion  
 TCF Andalusia, AL*

A lot of time!  
 A little space,  
 A kind of quiet  
 Resting place,  
 Are what I need  
 At times like these  
 A special spot  
 Where I can grieve.



## A Father's View of The Compassionate Friends: Courage, Surprise, And Understanding

### Attendance Requirement: Courage

I don't think I am unique. I did not want to attend a meeting of Compassionate Friends. I was coerced by my wife. It was subtle but effective. My son, on the other hand, made a devil's deal; he agreed to go to the next meeting in exchange for a favor—his debt some weeks away. The thought of discussing death nauseates me. We, my son and I, had made a bad deal.

### The Meeting: A Surprise

I was surprised to find I was not the only man to have lost a child. There was a reality to that recognition. My loss, not unlike yours, is a personal matter. No one can tell me how I feel or how I ought to feel. Yet, the group never made me feel guilty about my selfishness; they understood.

### The Result: An Understanding

Compassionate Friends is not an efficient organization. There are no systems, no quick, easy cures. Grief is a catharsis. Most of what you hear here you will dismiss; it will not apply to you. But, there are nuggets—small ideas you will want to try or things you will want to think about. Some you will try. Many you will discard. Only a few will help the pain. These, you will treasure. Your friends and associates may try to understand your grief and try to help. They can do neither. They don't understand. The people at the meetings do understand. And they try to help. My son felt he had gained little from the meeting. Yet, he left feeling he had helped someone else deal with his grief. What a marvelous satisfaction for a 15-year-old.

### What's in it for you?

Compassionate Friends is here to help—to listen, to suggest, to understand. If you handle your grief well, you do not need Compassionate Friends. But we need you. Your approach or method of dealing with grief could help one or more of us. Please share it.

*Bob Watts ~ TCF, Stanford, CT*

## Life's Tapestry

It's said a splendid tapestry depicts Life's "grand design." Immense in its complexity, the threads all intertwine...to form a pattern illustrating with explicit weave the reason why our children die, and why we're left to grieve.

I've heard it call the "Master Plan," and there are those who say each thread's the story of a life, from birth to dying day—no death occurs that is not planned; some greater purpose served.

And some draw comfort from belief that fate cannot be swerved. If destiny holds all the cards then nothing would be changed, we would not alter tragedy—for death was prearranged. I do not know if I believe that fate decreed the day my life lost its illusions—enchantment came to stay.

But I do know the path I'm on is one that's far less clear...I stumble through this dad mess praying light will reappear. Yet in my soul her light lives on; my love for her remains with innocence she healed my heart and broke thru life's chains.

My daughter showed me how to trust, her needs taught me to fight, she planted seeds of caring about others and their plight.

If the tapestry depicts the life of all who walk the earth. The master weaver added my child's thread, and knew her worth. Her life, her death, my agony—are pushing me to find the reason for her years with me, and why I'm left behind.

I understand my path will stay in darkness 'til I see the means by which I'll utilize the gifts she gave to me. If I can find a way to share the caring I now feel it will honor her dear memory, and help my heart to heal.

Salty Miglioccio  
TCF Babylon, AT

*Real grief is not healed by time.  
If time does anything,  
it deepens our grief.  
The longer we live,  
the more fully we become aware  
of who he/she was for us,  
and the more intimately we experience  
what their love meant to us.*

—Henri Nouwen

## May: The Unusually Difficult Month

For the bereaved parent, May is frequently the cruelest month. The month of May offers the rest of the world a promise of another carefree summer, swimming, family vacations, relaxation, reading, cook-outs and picnics, trips to the lake and so much that is inherent in our culture.

Yet May also brings memories of our children. The common denominator for mothers (and fathers) is Mother's Day. This tradition was wonderful when our children were alive; now the direct mail and newspaper advertising, sentimental television spots, in-store promotions, cards and letters and the countdown to the day itself are very cruel reminders of our lost children. Who will remember us on Mother's Day?

This will be my fourth Mother's Day without my son. I miss him terribly all year long, but May and December are the worst months for me. First we have Mother's Day, then my son's birthday and throughout the month I am bombarded with invitations for high school and college graduations....each one reminding me of what once was. My son finishing grade school, high school, college, graduate school. Each was accompanied by a ceremony. All the ceremonies rush into my mind as I realize how much of myself is my memories and those memories are very entwined with my son's life. A big part of me died with him that night in December.

Three years ago I was overwhelmed, sobbing, still occasionally in deep shock. My mind was mush, my heart was crushed and I did not have the will to do much more than quietly weep. It was my first Mother's Day without my son, the first birthday that he wasn't here, the first Memorial Day Weekend without him. I was paralyzed. May would never be joyful for me again.

What to do....what to do. I ask myself this question each April as we begin the ramp up to the longest month. This year, I am counting out the last days of April and wondering how I will handle it. I am not worried about it; I am just wondering. I have gotten used to the transformation that has taken place in my mind, heart and soul. I experienced a slow spiritual awakening which accompanied a deep, deep sense of loss over which I have no control. I go with it.

There are questions that we must ask ourselves. The answers are unique to us. Collectively we know this is a month to dread; individually we have our own memories and our own methods of coping. Collectively we lean on each other for hope, comfort and support. Individually, we each walk our own road depending on how many circumstances of life are in our month of May: Mother's Day, Memorial Day, birthdays, death anniversaries, graduations, weddings, baptisms, first communions, confirmations, how we handled the beginning of summer, the end of the school year....all of these events can bombard us in May.

The memories float into our minds like a mist that thickens into a heavy fog. We are enveloped in our fog of memories; the before death years come to us in a hodgepodge of the happiest times and clash with the reality of now. These are our memories, our children and ultimately our choices. And there seems to be little joy we can take from this month of memories.

Once again, we make the decision. If we are not ready to acknowledge Mother's Day, we shouldn't do it. If we are facing other days in May that will tear at our hearts, we must plan for it. Some of us prefer to be alone and isolated. Others of us prefer to be with friends or family. Some of us go to the cemetery, others go to the park. Some read, watch movies, sit on the deck or simply rest. Others take a weekend trip which puts them into a different state of reality.

There are as many choices as there are parents who have lost their children. Consider your options. Be honest with yourself. Don't be pushed into anything. Take control. We each move forward toward hope at a different rate and in a different way. This is not about meeting the expectations of others; this is a personal journey toward peace and hope. It is your journey.

I will always miss my son. I will always feel deep sorrow at his uncompleted life. But I know that he would want me to move forward, move back into the sunshine that is life on this earth. I'm working on it. Be patient with me. This is the most difficult road I have ever walked, but I am in motion, moving mostly forward and seeking something akin to peace, hope and tranquility. I will always be a work in progress.

Annette Mennen Baldwin—April 27, 2006  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX

"The deeper that sorrow carves into your being the more joy you can contain. Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?"

-- Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931)

This Winter of your life will pass, as all seasons do. Stay in your season of Winterness as long as need be, for everything you feel is appropriate. There is no right way to grieve. There is just your way. It will take as long as it takes.

Rusty Berkus, from To Heal Again

### Circle

How do you bear it all?  
The cry came from a mother  
Whose son had died only weeks before.  
We were in a circle, looking at her,  
Looking around, looking away,  
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.  
How do we bear it?  
I don't know.  
But the circle helps.

by Eva Lager, TCF/Western Australia  
(Eve's daughter Milya Claudia Lager died by suicide 3/4/90)

### MEMORIAL DAY

For each grave where a soldier  
lies at his rest

For each prayer that is said today out of love

For each sign of remembering  
someone who died

Let us also give thought to  
the mothers and fathers  
the brothers and sisters  
the friends and the lovers  
who death left behind.

By Sascha Wagner

### REMEMBRANCE

I see your smile in the brightness of summer sun.  
A gentle breeze is the touch of your hand on mine.  
A wave breaks softly on the shore and I hear you whisper,  
*Remember me.....*

A winged bird begins its flight into the distant sky.  
The sound of children's laughter fills the air.  
The evening stars become your eyes, and I reply  
*You are ever near.....*

-Priscilla Kenney, TCF, Kennebunk, ME

Grief is the price we pay for love,  
We did not lose our children.  
They died, taking with them  
Our hopes and dreams for the future,  
But never, ever taking away their love.  
Though death comes, love will never go away,  
Hold it tight through the storms of grief  
And bring it with you into today.

LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY

Darcie D. Sims

### A Mother's Tear

A single tear trickles down my cheek  
It tells a tale I cannot speak  
Of days gone by that have stilled.  
It tells of dreams left unfulfilled.  
It's wetness holds "what might have been."

Not going to the Senior Prom.  
No more "I love you Mom."  
No cap and gown on graduation day.  
No wedding bells in the month of May.

No more family birthday celebrations,  
No voting for the leader of our nation.  
Gone, the dream of horse and farm,  
Never mine, to hold her babies in arm.

You've followed the path of my lonely tear,  
It speaks of one that I hold most dear.  
Now you will this mother's cry,  
"Why God?"  
Why did my daughter die?

By Karen Bell, Bereavement Magazine



**The Compassionate Friends**  
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**Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship  
for Bereaved Families**



**MAY AND JUNE 2014**

### **Make Reservations Early**

The National Compassionate Friends Conference will be held in Chicago, IL, this year. The dates are July 11-13, 2014, and early hotel reservations are highly recommended. The hotel requires a one night deposit for each room, but this is refundable if cancelled within 72 hours of the first date of your reservation for the hotel.

To make reservations for the national conference, go to the Compassionate Friends website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org). Once you are on the home page, look at the right hand column.

There you will find the logo for the Chicago National Conference. Click on the logo and the form will appear on your screen. You may complete the form on-line and send it immediately. This will guarantee you a hotel room as well as registration for the event.



**37<sup>th</sup>** National Conference  
Chicago, Illinois  
July 11-13, 2014